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Title	<i>Tracing Indian students at Oxford before the Second World War</i>
Description	Dr Sumita Mukherjee (Oxford) - 'Tracing Indian Students at Oxford before the Second World War'
Presenter(s)	Sumita Mukherjee
Recording	http://media.podcasts.ox.ac.uk/engfac/indian_traces/mukherjee.mp3
Keywords	india, indian, exhibition, culture, V300, 2010-03-01, 1
Part of series	<i>Indian Traces in Oxford</i>

Contributor Yes, so this afternoon I want to talk about Indian students at Oxford University before the Second World War. More generally, some of the less well-known students, some of the unremarkable students as Amitav Ghosh mentioned. And really discuss and question how one can trace and find out more about the lives of these unknown Indians.

If you see this graph of Indians at Oxford from 1910 to 1938 - it's compiled from government records - you can see that there's quite a sizeable number of Indian students across the period. Up to 150 in 1922, down to just over forty, so an average of about fifty, sixty every year.

And Indian students were the largest foreign contingent of students at British universities in the early twentieth century; more than Australians, Canadians or any other country. And one of the reasons for this was because of the great link between British education and India. Any Indian in this period - at the height of the Empire - who wanted to rise to one of the highest ranks of administration, of law, of education, had to have a British qualification, a British degree.

And so, increasingly, Indians came over to Britain to compete with British people. And the opening up of the Indian Civil Service exams in the 1850s allowed Indians to compete alongside British people to join the highest ranks of the civil service administration in India. And they could make use of the Indian institute, which Amitav mentioned is opposite, which was designed primarily for British candidates for the ICS, but also Indians could make use of it.

So the vast majority of Indians at Oxford in this period intended to join the ICS, the civil service. Having said that, basically all Indian students joined the Majlis Society. Now, the Majlis Society was an Indian students' society founded in 1896. It was a debating society for Indian students modelled on the Oxford and Cambridge Unions, where they'd have political debates on the kind of model that, this house believes in a certain motion; the Indian students would debate upon this.

And the Majlis Society in this period invariably discussed Indian politics, nationalist politics, the role of India within Empire, the relationship between India and Britain. And invariably, all the Indian students would agree that India's position within Empire at the time was not the best position to be in.

And so, although a large portion of Indians did join the Indian Civil Service, they were loyal as such to the British Empire. They were collaborating with the British. In Oxford, they were able to debate and discuss nationalist ideas. And I would argue, that a society like the Majlis brought Indians from different regional and cultural backgrounds together, and was one of the first times that they could constitute the idea of an Indian community, and the idea of India as a whole nation and not just the province that they were aware of before they came out here.

Having discussed the Majlis very briefly, what I want to talk about today is how we can find out more about the interaction and relationship between Indians and British students in this period. And really raise the question of whether we can find out more about this interaction; was there any interaction. And what are some of the traces of some of this relationship and collaboration between Indian and British students?

Okay, so; I'm just going to talk about my experiences in finding out a bit more about some of these students here at Oxford. And with a university like Oxford, with the collegiate system, one naturally goes to the colleges because it's a smaller community. The colleges are the ones that keep the records of the lives of their students and it's much easier to get a sense of what the students were doing from the colleges.

As Judith Brown has done and *Windows Into The Past* with Balliol, we can build up an institutional history through the lives of the individuals within it. And she has discovered between 1853 and 1947 there were 88 Indians at Balliol. Now, Balliol had a reputation of being particularly favourable to Indians. They had one or two Indians every year. So, that's quite a high number.

But what I want to discuss is how did she get that number of 88 Indians students at Balliol between 1853 and 1947? And what she did was she went back to Balliol College, which is her college where she works, and looked at their college registers. And Balliol is one of the few colleges which has kept printed college registers of all their students. And these college registers are divided by year; so, what year a college student joined, and they're alphabetical. All the students obviously in Balliol at this time.

So, you've got the year – let's make something up; 1900 – you've got the surnames alphabetically. And under each students name it will say – for Balliol – what degree, what course they're taking. It would say, finally, what qualification they received from their degree, i.e. first class, second class, third class, whatever. Any college or university honours they might have got while they were here; perhaps they're a member of a sporting team; perhaps they're a president of a particular society. And – sorry, to go back – where they were born, for Balliol registers. And then some of the positions – the jobs that they took up after they left Balliol.

And this information has been compiled because the Balliol Alumni Office has been particularly good at keeping in contact with their students and kept up a regular correspondence. So, former students have told them, "I've now got this job," and so they've managed to note it down in their college registers.

So, having talked about Balliol and Judith Brown's research, I want to talk about my experiences at St John's College. If we can go across there...

Why St John's, you might ask. I have no link with St John's. I didn't study there or anything. And the primary reason why I'm going to be talking about St John's today is because the archivist was very, very kind to me. He answered all my confused, garbled emails and St John's has a very rich archive and has kept similar registers to the ones Balliol kept, but with slightly different information.

So, these are my notes that I made at St John's, when I was there, of various Indian students that I found. And they had about one student every two or three years.

What I should kind of raise here, which is one of the big problems or questions about looking through these college registers is, as I said, it's divided by year and is alphabetical names of people. So one has to just look for a name that sounds vaguely Indian or something bit exotic, oriental, you know. And obviously it depends on the person who's looking through the registers. I'd like to think that I would be fairly familiar with what an Indian surname is. But there are some surnames which – you know, like a Kahn – they might not be Indian; they might come from the Middle East, they might come from Central Asia. So, one has to be careful, when you're looking through these registers about what you automatically perceive as an Indian name. And in St John's it didn't say where the students were born. It only said what their previous schooling was.

So, another question that's raised is what happens if there was a very English sounding name like Jones or Smith, but who was educated in Delhi before they came to Oxford. Does one count that as an Indian student because they were coming from India, or does one automatically disregard them because one would assume that they had British parents? And that's just a question really.

And so, there are various students in St John's but, as I said, once every two or three years. But in 1922 there were two Indian students at St John's. And I'll just read out what I noted down at the time from the college registers on these two students. Okay...

Jaipal Singh or [[Ishvadas 0:09:11]] Jaipal Singh. 1922 to 1926. 1927, 1928 at St John's. Son of A.P Singh, priest and farmer. Educated at St Paul's English school, Ranchi, and St Augustine School, Canterbury. Fourth PPE and BA 1926. MA 1929. Football eleven, 1925-6. Hockey eleven, 1922 and onwards until 1926. Debating Society, secretary and president. Member of the Essay Society. Member of the university hockey team versus Cambridge, 1924, 25 and 26.

Then it mentioned the various jobs that he took up; he was [[covenanted 0:09:54]] assistant at the Royal Dutch Shell GP, London and Calcutta. Commercial Master of [[Achimota 0:10:00]] College and Gold Coast. Vice Principle of [[Rajhamad 0:10:02]] College in Raipur. And member of Constituent Assembly of India. Married with one son and two daughters.

And the second Indian student, also who also joined Michaelmas 1922 was another Singh. [[Moden Go Par 0:10:18]] Singh, 1922 to 24. Born 8th February 1892. Son of M Singh, [[Zummander 0:10:25]] Zummander, educated at Punjab University. Diploma of Education vocation course, 1923. A second class degree in English for a BA in 1924. MA in 1930. A member of the Essay Society and then Professor of English, Punjab University 1929. Vice Principle of the Government Training College, Punjab University, 1938. And he died in 1950 in partition riots.

Now, I'm not sure how many of you have heard of the Essay Society, but I certainly have never heard of that before. So, I asked Mike Warden, who's the archivist at St John's, immediately, "Why have you got two Singhs from different parts of India in 1922 who are both members of the Essay Society? What is this Essay Society?" And I'm just in the middle of [[?? 0:11:09]] this Essay Society, which I'll talk about in a minute.

So, if you haven't already guessed, the Essay Society was the society for undergraduate students at St John's where students would read out their essays to each other and discuss them. I know Oxford has a reputation of being swots but I think this is like really going too far.

So, luckily for me, and for us today, St John's has kept the minute books of this Essay Society. And so scrolling through, both Jaipal Singh and Go Par Singh joined in June 1923. And they attended various essays by other people; one on Matthew Arnold, one on the Devil, one on English press. But here on May 18th 1924, we see Go Par Singh, the one from Punjab, giving a paper on Rabindranath Tagore.

I'll just read out what it says about his paper in case you can't read it; "In public business, Mr M Go Pat Singh read a paper on Rabindranath Tagore. He gave the society an exceptionally interesting account of the poet's life and works and a very vivid description of the Indian scenery and the tropical sun and storms around which his poetry centres. After the paper, the usual discussion followed, during which conversation strayed in a pleasant way from Kipling's works to the art of peasant homes; from Indian craftwork and ivories; to Indian jugglers; jungle snakes with two mouths, one at each end; to cashmere shawls and sculpture. And Mr Go Par Singh took the opportunity of giving the society a most able survey of Indian thought and customs." (Laughter)

Now, automatically, a number of stereotypes have been coming out, even Tagore's almost a stereotype of India at this time; Kipling, jungle, jungles snakes, cashmere shawls. But to defend Singh and the members of the Essay Society, at least here was someone who was giving at least some idea of India to his British colleagues. And that's all I really want to say about that; it's just up there.

I now want to return to Jaipal Singh, the other guy, who, if you were listening when I was calling out all his various achievements, he was a member of the hockey eleven. And those of you who have seen the display outside would have seen a picture of Jaipal Singh in the middle of the St John's hockey eleven, 1925. He was a member of the hockey eleven 1922 to 25 at St John's and this is on the first year he was a member of the Hockey Society – sorry, just the hockey team. The first hockey team. We focus on him here.

Indian students often joined university and college sports teams. We have a cricketer outside as well and famously, [[Nowma Fitaldi 0:14:14]] who was at Balliol played for Balliol cricket team and played for the university cricket team against Cambridge, and kept the record for the highest runs scored on the Oxford Cambridge match, which was only just broken in 2005.

Jaipal Singh who played hockey for St John's and for the university went on to captain the Indian hockey team who won gold in Amsterdam in the 1928 Olympics.

Just quickly raise about – the issue I want to raise about this picture, and if you haven't already seen, the picture outside of the cricket team, which is from University College. Having been at St John's, I got very excited. I thought, you know, they have a very rich archive; found these photos of Jaipal Singh, found the Essay Society. I asked various other colleges if they had similar information and very few colleges have kept college registers, let alone photos or Essay Society minute books.

But University College does have a stack of – an album – of college photos of sports teams, matriculation photos and so forth. And the archivist, Noel Smith, said, "You're welcome to just come along and look through the photos and browse through them," which I did and which is how I found the Kahn [[Saheeb 0:15:40]] photo outside.

And I just want to raise this kind of issue that – again, it's kind of a similar issue to when I was looking through the registers, when you're looking out for an Indian surname – I was invariably looking for someone who had dark skin. You know, the racial profiling that we're all so aware of at the moment, this is what I was doing when I was looking through these photos, although at the bottom, they would say who was in the position of these photos.

So, I just want to raise these kind of concerns and issues about research in general and about the research that's come up along here.

And just as I close, I just want to say that despite perhaps this [[?? 0:16:32]] Jaipal Singh is a bit separate in a way, you know. Some people might read into that; I'm not going to go into that. And as Amitav Ghosh mentioned in his experiences in the 1970s, there was racial prejudice, there was social segregation, there was distance between Indians and the British, even in the early twentieth century.

The first Indian president of the Oxford Union was [[DF Caraca 0:16:58]] elected in 1933 who was a Parsi from Bombay. And in his last session as president, he complained about the colour bar in Oxford and Britain generally.

So, these archives, these college registers, these minute books, these photos only give us a small part of the story. Just a trace. I've talked about three or four Indian students in the early twentieth century, and we looked – if we think back to that graph that I showed at the beginning, with an average of about 50 Indian students every year for about forty years, what happened to them? What are the traces of those people? Some of them did become prominent. They took up big positions and we know more about them.

But there are very many who didn't join the hockey team, who didn't get involved in the Essay Society, who are perhaps just a scribbled name on a college register. And I just want to end with that open question.

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